



European Union

European
Social Fund

ESF Data Evidence Requirements – Eligibility and results

Contents

1. Introduction	3
1.1 Purpose of this guidance.....	3
1.2 Background / Context.....	3
1.3 Who should use this guidance?	4
1.4 Extent and limitations of this guidance	5
2. Assessing eligibility	6
2.1 What needs to be assessed and evidenced? (Eligibility)	6
2.2 Evidence of eligibility.....	6
2.3 Who should obtain evidence of eligibility and when should evidence be obtained?.....	6
2.4 How must the eligibility assessment be carried out?	7
2.5 Methodology for obtaining evidence of ESF eligibility	8
3. Evidence of results	18
3.1 Evidence of result (when linked to eligible payment).....	18
3.2 Who should obtain evidence of results and when should evidence be obtained?.....	19
3.3 How must results assessments be carried out?	19
3.4 Methodology for obtaining evidence of ESF results	19

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of this guidance

This document provides guidance on how to assess and evidence (i.e. how to **verify**) an individual or project's eligibility for support by the European Social Fund in England. This guidance applies to match funded activity as well as activity funded directly by ESF and it supplements the existing eligibility guidance that has already been published (see web link below):

- https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/510300/european_social_fund_national_eligibility_rules.pdf

The separate guidance on ESF indicator definitions along with the European Commission's guidelines on monitoring and evaluation and data gathering are in addition to this guidance and are primarily concerned with ensuring that high quality data is gathered and reported in a consistent way (and include guidance on **validating** the consistency of indicator data at participant record level).

1.2 Background / Context

The ESF Operational Programme sets out the main types of target group and entities that can be supported by ESF and this is supplemented by the national eligibility rules (see web-link above). Eligibility criteria may also be set out in further action notes and guidance notes issued by the ESF Managing Authority as well as in provider contracts relating to ESF provision (for example, ESF co-financing organisation contracts with delivery partners / sub-contractors) and also in the project's own entry requirements. These eligibility criteria determine the eligibility of all expenditure related to participants. In this context, such criteria are referred to as financial eligibility criteria.

The basic eligibility criteria (relating to UK residency) and any specific eligibility criteria (e.g. labour market status / age etc.) act , in effect, as `gateways' to the programme expenditure since they help `enable' actual costs to be spent as well as enabling `contract costs'. Neither actual costs nor contract costs can be spent on ineligible participants. This means that `direct bid' organisations have to gather basic eligibility data (and any specific eligibility data where appropriate) as well as CFO organisations / providers funded under contract costs.

For certain priority axes/ investment priorities / operations / actions , some `output' features of participants can be decisive for the financial eligibility of expenditure

relating to them. For example, in YEI, eligibility would be based on a number of criteria – for example: age; NEET status; and location of residence. In this example, the characteristics of the participants are clearly a condition for the eligibility of expenditure – and would require additional supporting evidence beyond self-declaration. It should be noted that some exceptions are allowed under this guidance in relation to other criteria. Of course, such financial eligibility criteria are **in addition to** other financial / payment eligibility criteria - for example, criteria such as ensuring that: declared costs have been incurred and paid; costs are linked to eligible periods of time; and ensuring that costs are supported by appropriate invoices etc.

In instances where there is **a sole financial eligibility criterion** that determines whether or not a participant can benefit from ESF support, there is still a strict requirement for supporting evidence which goes beyond a simple signed self-declaration by the participant. So, for example, if a project was contracted **only** to target and support unemployed people there would need to be additional data evidence (beyond a signed self-declaration) to evidence that the participants recruited by the project were unemployed. Along with this 'hard evidence' there is also a requirement for management verification checks – for example during an Article 125 spot-check by Managing Authority staff.

When a payment is directly linked to a participant / project achieving **a result** then this is also a financial eligibility condition. So, for example, this means that if a project is only paid for participants achieving a particular immediate result (on leaving or within 4 weeks of leaving) then the fulfilment of this condition should be evidenced and this should be subject to management verification checks. This requirement is most likely to apply to CFOs and their delivery partners given that they are using contract costs methodology which may include the direct linking of payments to the achievement of results. For direct bid organisations who have contract payments based on actual costs the additional data evidence requirement (beyond self-certification) will not apply for results – since there is no direct link between the results and payments.

The programme will have a wide range of other / output and result indicators that are not directly linked to financial eligibility. Here, the main issue is quality and completeness of data and the methods used to gather and store the data. The underlying required evidence for such data can be less strict – which means there can be a greater reliance on signed 'self-certification'.

This guidance covers the methodology for gathering the evidence relating to financial eligibility (in connection with participant eligibility and results linked to payments) and provides examples of evidence that could be used.

1.3 Who should use this guidance?

This guidance should be used by 'direct bid' grant bid beneficiary organisations, CFOs and partners and the Managing Authority and Intermediate Bodies.

1.4 Extent and limitations of this guidance

It is not possible for this guidance to take all eventualities into account. Note that the guidance is not exhaustive and it remains the responsibility of the beneficiary to ensure that evidence is adequate and appropriately verified.

It should be noted, for example, that the evidence requirements for verification may not fully reflect or capture the complexity of the output and result indicator definitions. Notwithstanding the limits upon self-declaration below, for some eligibility criteria it may not be possible to provide evidence. For example, if a lack of basic skills is an eligibility requirement there is no documentation to 'prove' this' (it is not possible to prove a negative). In this type of scenario, the participant should self-declare their eligibility.

This guidance also has implications for the evidence base for some output and result indicator MI data that are being gathered for the ESF programme. In particular, the European Commission has made it clear to the England ESF Managing Authority that:

“self-declaration as an exclusive source of data collection is acceptable only in case of data not related to financial eligibility. So, for example, in operations where unemployment is conditional to participation, the data collection should not rely solely on the self-definition of the criteria of unemployment”

This means that any management information indicator data that covers the following should not be evidenced solely by self-declaration:

- eligibility (for an individual to join the programme);
- eligibility for a micro, small or mediums sized enterprise (SME) to benefit from ESF support; and
- payments for results

The European Commission has therefore made it clear that the ESF Managing Authority and the EC / national auditors should be able to verify how a beneficiary organisation or delivery partner satisfied themselves about a participant's eligibility on enrolment and/ or whether or not a result was sufficiently evidenced to enable a payment to be made.

This guidance focuses primarily on verifying evidence for (i) financial eligibility / MI output data linked to financial eligibility and (ii) results payments / MI results data linked to payments.

As previously indicated, wider payments evidence requirements are not covered in this guidance (for these you should refer to any specific conditions / wider payments evidence requirements set out in the relevant contracts or funding agreements).

Section 2 of this guidance covers data evidence for **eligibility** how eligibility assessments must be made (i.e. a potential **4-step methodology**).

Section 3 of this guidance explains data evidence requirements for **results** that are lined to payments (i.e. a potential **3-step methodology**).

2. Assessing eligibility

2.1 What needs to be assessed and evidenced? (Eligibility)

Participant eligibility and the initial assessment / suitability assessment

Before agreeing to support a participant, it is usually considered good practice to undertake some form of initial or early assessment of the individual's circumstances to identify:

- the personal circumstances of the participant, identifying how the ESF funded activity will be suitable and effective in addressing their needs;
- the particular barriers or challenges they face (relevant to the ESF programme objectives); and
- whether the participant qualifies for support from the ESF programme and project

An inadequate initial assessment can result in poor value-for-money decisions and/or ineffective support, both resulting in project costs that may be ineligible for ESF support.

2.2 Evidence of eligibility

Proof must be obtained to evidence that:

- (I) The participant is legally able to reside in the UK (and work in the UK) during the period of ESF support; and
- (II) The project's eligibility criteria are met (the entry conditions that individuals or entities must meet to qualify for support).

It should be noted that the Managing Authority's guidance on eligibility rules is in addition to this guidance.

2.3 Who should obtain evidence of eligibility and when should evidence be obtained?

Who?

The beneficiary organisation or, where applicable, the provider / delivery partner carrying out the participant enrolment procedures for the beneficiary organisation. The beneficiary organisation decides who carries out any assessments that may be undertaken.

When should evidence be obtained?

Eligibility evidence should be obtained at the point of enrolment. The ESF Managing Authority for England recommends this approach as best practice.

In any event, evidence must be obtained before the eligible costs of the ESF activity (for the participant in question) are declared to the England ESF Managing Authority or, if applicable, to an Intermediate Body (IB) established by the ESF Managing Authority to process claims.

The beneficiary organisation / co-financing organisation decides the best approach for their projects – whether delivered by themselves or by delivery partners. However, they need to consider the associated risks when making their decision. For example, if participants are enrolled on the condition that they must provide suitable evidence at a later point:

- Procedures and controls must be put in place to prevent eligible costs being declared to the ESF Managing Authority / IB until suitable evidence is provided by the participant.
- If the participant is subsequently unable to provide suitable evidence or a reason to apply an exception, this means that no ESF support is payable and the beneficiary or delivery partner will be liable for all support costs for that individual.

Again, the beneficiary organisation / co-financing organisation decides the best approach for their projects – whether delivered by themselves or by delivery partners and they need to consider the associated risks when making their decision. Procedures and controls must be put in place to prevent eligible results payments being declared to the ESF Managing Authority / IB until suitable evidence is provided. Suitable evidence must be provided for results payments. No exceptions can be made for results evidence

2.4 How must the eligibility assessment be carried out?

This guidance, which explains the `hierarchy' of checks, aims to help beneficiary organisations comply with the England ESF Managing Authority's eligibility rules.

The England ESF Managing Authority and auditors will check whether the beneficiary / delivery partner has followed the methodology correctly. Intentional non-compliance with the required approach – such as using the `exception / no evidence' option (point (iv) below) before making reasonable attempts to obtain stronger evidence from the participant can lead to irregular expenditure and a consequent reduction in ESF support.

In brief, there are four ways to complete the eligibility checks, in descending order of preference:

- (i) obtain documents from the preferred evidence list (Step 2 below);
- (ii) a referral / introduction / written confirmation from a relevant third party (see Step 2) ;
- (iii) alternative documents (Step 3) if considered to be credible and persuasive by the beneficiary organisation / delivery partner;
- (iv) make a risk-based exception if no evidence can be provided and if suitably justified (Step 4).

Beneficiary organisations should always request 'preferred evidence' in the first instance. Alternative evidence or risk-based exceptions must not be used ahead of preferred evidence for reasons of convenience or simplicity.

The preferred approach for verification of evidence is for the provider to keep actual copies of documentation as evidence. However, the provider can countersign a participant's application / enrolment / learning agreement form (whichever is most appropriate) to confirm that the necessary evidence documentation has been seen. The form should be signed by both the participant and the provider and the form should identify what type of evidence has been seen.

The England ESF Managing Authority would not expect risk-based exceptions to be used as the predominant way of assessing eligibility and these cases are likely to attract particular audit scrutiny.

Auditors may review the methods used by beneficiary organisations to highlight misuse of the rules and/or unusual trends against comparable projects.

Beneficiary organisations must apply the methodology in the way intended (see below).

The above approach should mean that ESF support is only refused when the beneficiary organisation or delivery partner is not convinced that the individual meets the entry conditions based on: the information and documents presented; the suitability assessment; and the reasons given for not having any 'preferred' stronger evidence.

2.5 Methodology for obtaining evidence of ESF eligibility

Step 1: identify the eligibility criteria to be evidenced

The essential criteria are those that determine whether or not ESF support is available for the participant / entity.

'Essential criteria' means:

- The individual is legally able to reside in the UK (and, if relevant to the project, work in the UK) during the period of ESF support.
- The individual is part of the target participant group agreed between the beneficiary and the Managing Authority (specified employment status, educational attainment, age etc.)

The target participants group will be determined by the specific objectives of the relevant ESF programme priority, including the target output and result indicators.

The participant's full address must still be obtained as part of the participant's record, including usual workplace address or study location where applicable, to establish that the participant qualifies for support from the England ESF programme.

In addition, there is no requirement to obtain evidence for the following participant criteria even if they are correct qualifying criteria:

- Disabilities, medical records / opinions, work-limiting health conditions, substance misuse;
- Gender identity / sex;
- Sexual orientation;
- Ethnicity / racial origin;
- Religion or belief;
- Identifies as part of a minority or marginalised community;
- Participant is an ex-offender;
- Homelessness;
- Records relating to other people, for example, children, dependents, caring responsibilities or whether the participant lives in a jobless household;
- Troubled families

Whether any or more of the above factors are part of the qualifying criteria / target participant group, the following principles must be followed:

- Participants must confirm that they meet the required criteria. This information should be specific, signed and dated and retained with the participant records. 'Specific' means that the relevant eligibility criteria must be stated: 'generic' statements – such as 'I meet all applicable criteria' are not acceptable. The confirmation can be part of other participant forms and declarations.

Beneficiary organisations / delivery partners should of course remain alert to the possibility that false information is being provided in order to gain access to ESF support. Suspected fraud must be properly investigated and beneficiaries must not enrol participants unless satisfied, to the best of their knowledge, that they meet the criteria.

Eligibility evidence is only required when the criterion determines whether or not ESF support can be offered by the project.

Table 1: Worked examples

Project-specific criteria (target group)	ESF Evidence requirement
Economically inactive (aged 25 and over) , not in education or training, who have complex barriers to employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evidence that legally able to reside / work in UK (applies to all participants) - Evidence that economically inactive (but not required if project also provides the same level of support to those who are economically active) - Evidence that 25 or over (but not required if project provides same level of support to under 25s). <p>Note: no requirement to try and evidence that an individual does not have any formal qualifications.</p>
Employed, including self-employed, with no formal qualifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evidence that legally able to reside / work in UK (applies to all participants) - Evidence that employed or self-employed (but not required if the project provides the same level of support to unemployed / economically inactive participants) <p>Note: no requirement to try and evidence that an individual does not have any formal qualifications.</p>
Employed, including self-employed participants , with up to and including a lower secondary education (or other specified educational attainment).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evidence that legally able to reside / work in UK (applies to all participants) - Evidence that employed or self-employed (but not required if the project provides the same level of support to unemployed / economically inactive participants). - Evidence that individuals have achieved the required minimum educational attainment (but not required if same level of support offered to participants with no qualifications)

Step 2: Request items from the preferred list of evidence

See Tables 2 and 3 below for list of `preferred evidence`.

Please note:

- Only one item from each bulleted list is required
- The intention is to obtain (i) documents that are readily available to the participant OR (ii) an introduction / referral from a relevant third party organisation that the individual is already engaged with and is therefore

familiar with their personal circumstances. (The approach is not to ask the participant to spend additional time, effort or costs trying to obtain something they don't currently have.)

- Where the participant does have the preferred evidence but has not brought the item along for the enrolment assessment, they should be asked to return with the evidence at a convenient time. It would be inappropriate to consider alternative (weaker) evidence (step 3) or justify an exception (step 4) until this step is complete.
- Try to select an item of evidence that will verify more than one eligibility condition , e.g. one recent payslip confirms (a) participant in work and (b) is likely to contain national insurance number.
- The items in the list should not be interpreted as England ESF Managing Authority stating that the evidence provides absolute proof of the eligibility condition. The Managing Authority's objective is to achieve a reasonable degree of assurance – to the extent possible- that the participant qualifies for support , without imposing a significant burden on the participant or refusing support to those most in need.

Where referrals / introductions from third parties are accepted:

- The referrer should provide a written statement. The written confirmation referred to above must be signed, dated and at least contain:
 - name of participant
 - name of ESF project (this is preferable but not a strict requirement) the eligibility criteria being confirmed
- If a participant's eligibility is confirmed by an introduction / referral or correspondence from DWP / Jobcentre Plus or National Careers Services, or Local Authority the referral document can be accepted in good faith at face value in the absence of any information to the contrary (such referrals are not considered to be participant `self-declarations'). The beneficiary / provider does not need to obtain additional evidence on how that organisation was able to provide such confirmation but the referral should confirm that the eligibility criteria have been met and should also name the individual (and preferably be addressed to the ESF project).The onus on checking eligibility rests ultimately with the ESF project / provider.
- It should be noted that some documents are never out of date (e.g. qualification certificates) but information related to a participant's current circumstances need to be supported by recent evidence. The following guidelines apply (if in doubt, follow the `alternative evidence' approach).
 - Recent payslip = issued in last 3 months.
 - Documents produced annually (tax related, tax credits) = latest issued (should therefore be no older than 12 months).
 - Award letters (grants, benefits, student loans) – original letter acceptable unless recurring award letters are issued (e.g. annual tax credits notification).

- Other correspondence (non-recurring in nature) = no longer than 12 months old.
- Introductions / referrals from relevant third party = within last 3 months

Step 3: if no preferred evidence available, consider credible alternative documents

Again, the intention is to obtain documents that are readily available to the participant or an introduction / referral from a relevant third party organisation that the individual is already engaged with and is familiar with their personal circumstances. The participant should not be asked to spend additional time, effort or costs trying to obtain something that they don't currently have.

Consider informing the Managing Authority of common 'alternative evidence' to see whether they can be added to the preferred list.

Examples of alternative evidence include:

- documents from the 'preferred evidence' list that are too old / expired.
- documents with partial information e.g. surname but no forename
- A combination of documents not listed as 'preferred' evidence e.g. TV licence correspondence; digital TV subscription letters etc.

Where satisfied with such alternative evidence, document the justification for proceeding, to include:

- Reasons why the participant does not have any preferred evidence available and confirmation that credible and plausible reason have been provided and are acceptable;
- Explain why the alternative items provide persuasive evidence that the participant meets the criteria.

Step 4: if no alternative documents, consider whether an exception to the evidence requirements can be justified

Where satisfied that, despite the absence of any evidence, the participant qualifies for support, document the justification for proceeding, to include:

- Reasons why participant does not have any preferred or alternative evidence available.
- Document how the beneficiary / delivery partner has attempted to collect the required evidence.
- Explain how / why satisfied that the reasons provided by participant are credible / plausible.

If there is no case to justify an exception then the individual will not qualify for ESF support.

Table 2: Preferred evidence for assessing ESF participant eligibility

Type of condition	Examples of entry conditions	Indicative list of supporting documents (not exhaustive) (Only <u>one</u> item from list required)
Basic rules to participate in the England ESF programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal right to live in the UK during the period of ESF support • For operations helping participants to gain work for other work-related outcomes: the legal right to work in an EU member state. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National insurance number : either the plastic card or letter from HMRC (you must have the right to work or study in the UK to get a National Insurance Number) • Full passport (EU Member) • Full passport (not EU Member State): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Passport either endorsed `indefinite leave to remain – proceed (settled status) or includes work or residency permits or visa stamps (unexpired) and all related conditions met ○ Some non-EEA nationals have an Identity Card issued by the Home Office in place of a visa, confirming the individual’s right to stay , work or study in the UK – these cards are acceptable • Letter from the UK Immigration and Nationality Directorate granting indefinite leave to remain (settled status) • Birth / adoption certificate (EU Member State) • Residency permits for foreign nationals (usually in a passport) • Marriage/civil partnership certificate (if partner has legal right to live in the UK and this can be evidenced).
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESF support for individuals who have attained a specific qualification(s) or certain level of qualification 	<p><u>Qualifications held</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualification certificate issued to individual. Projects should retain a copy of the certificate in the participants file, certified as a true copy of the original.

Type of condition	Examples of entry conditions	Indicative list of supporting documents (not exhaustive) (Only <u>one</u> item from list required)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESF support only for individuals qualified in a specified subject / field • ESF support for those individuals studying full-time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Records of the academic institution / qualification body .if such direct access would not be available to auditors / MA staff in future, then the project must retain copies of the records inspected. • Project or the participant to request confirmation of qualifications in writing from the academic institution /qualification body.
Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only for people in work • Only for self-employed • Only for people who do not work/persons with disabilities / economically inactive/NEET etc. • Must be working more/less than a certain number of hours each week; • Must have a certain type of employment contract (permanent, fixed term, zero-hours, temporary etc.) • Support for individuals under consultation or notice of redundancy 	<p><u>Self employment</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A submitted HMRC `SA302' self assessment tax declaration, with acknowledgement of receipt. SA302s can be requested from HMRC. • Where the first SA302has not yet been submitted, other documentation to show that the trade/business activity is registered with HMRC for tax and national insurance purposes • Records to show actual payment of Class 2 National Insurance Contributions • Business records in the name of the business - evidence that a business has been established and is active / operating e.g. lease on premises; purchase / lease of equipment; publicity materials; business invoices; correspondence with Local Authority; legal correspondence. • If registered as a limited company: Companies House records / listed as Company Director

Type of condition	Examples of entry conditions	Indicative list of supporting documents (not exhaustive) (Only <u>one</u> item from list required)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmation letter from accountant • VAT registration conformation from HMRC
Employment Education Training	At risk of becoming NEET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Referral letter from school and . preferably, an additional confirmation letter from the local authority confirming that the individual is at risk of becoming NEET</u>
		<p><u>People not in work (Unemployed including long term unemployed and economically inactive)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DWP/Jobcentre Plus benefits decision notification letter – new claims award / decision or change of circumstances decision letter. • Written conformation / referral from DWP/Jobcentre Plus or a referral from Careers Service or similar. • Where an individual is not engaged with DWP/Jobcentre Plus: written confirmation from a relevant third party that has been assisting the individual and so has an understanding of their current circumstances (for example, NGO, voluntary organisation, charity , third sector / not for profit organisation, social services or other professional providing support and guidance etc.) – but must be independent of the ESF project management and delivery team. As an alternative to written confirmation, sight of original case notes and support records are acceptable. Photocopies must be suitably redacted to remove sensitive personal data or if photocopies are inappropriate or not permitted, a written agreement that MA/EC auditors can access the

Type of condition	Examples of entry conditions	Indicative list of supporting documents (not exhaustive) (Only <u>one</u> item from list required)
		<p>original records on request).</p> <p><u>Employed</u> : number of hours worked</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Latest payslip • Employment contract • Correspondence from employer • If applicable, copy of redundancy consultation or notice (general notice to group of staff or individual notifications)
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum age; maximum age; age ranges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth certificate • Full driving licence • Full passport • National Identity Card (EU) • Firearms certificate / Shotgun licence • Northern Ireland voters card • Employment contract / payslip (if date if birth is quoted) • Pension statement (if date of birth is quoted) • Evidence that in receipt of age-related state benefits • Letter/ confirmation from educational institution (if applicable)
Employer / employment sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only for those employed in the public sector • Only for those employed in the private sector / voluntary sector etc 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Latest payslip • Latest annual P60 • Latest benefits-in-kind statement • Employment contract • Correspondence from employer
Address / geographic location of individual (YEI only)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For YEI, eligible participants have to be living in the designated YEI programme 	<p><u>Home</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter / confirmation from home owner (family / lodging) • Full driving licence (EU) • Recent statement from bank /

Type of condition	Examples of entry conditions	Indicative list of supporting documents (not exhaustive) (Only <u>one</u> item from list required)
	<p>areas which are sub-regional in England</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Please note that the `category of region' applies to the location of the ESF `operation' and not the home address of the participant.. For the purposes of recording and reporting headline MI data, the participant's data will be linked to the appropriate ESF operation and its category of region. (YEI data is not broken down by category of region) 	<p>building society / credit card company / credit union</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of registration on electoral roll Benefits / State Pension notification letter Recent utility bill or council tax demand / correspondence Tenancy agreement / documents Mortgage statement / correspondence HMRC correspondence Rent card / statement Solicitors correspondence <p><u>Work</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Latest payslip (if actual work address indicated) Employment contract (if more than one possible location – must confirm actual work address) Correspondence from employer (if more than one possible work location – must confirm actual work address) <p><u>Study</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correspondence from institution Student ID card (if identifies name of institution) If institution has locations in more than one programme region – must also identify main location of course.

Table 3: Preferred evidence for assessing SME eligibility

Type of condition	Examples of entry conditions	Indicative list of supporting documents (not exhaustive) (Only <u>one</u> item from list required)
SME	Micro, small and medium enterprise enterprises to be supported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmation that the employer has fewer than 250 employees in the UK as recorded by the Employer Data Service or the Companies House registration

3. Evidence of results

3.1 Evidence of result (when linked to eligible payment)

Proof of evidence must be obtained to support any result indicators that link to payments.

Results for participants have to be achieved ('manifested') within 4 weeks of the participant's leaving the operation and will typically fall under one or more of the of the following broad 'result categories' and may also be combined with 'output' (on starting) characteristics – for example the 'into employment on leaving' result may have to demonstrate a progression from the 'on starting' output characteristic 'unemployed'

It is likely that most of the results will fall under one or more of the following headings.

Labour market

- Into work on leaving
- Into self-employment on leaving
- Into job search on leaving (actively seeking work)

Education /training

- Into education / training on leaving
- Gaining a qualification

YEI specific

- Offer of employment / continued education /apprenticeship / traineeship on leaving
- Completion of YEI supported intervention

Entities

- SMEs successfully completing projects

3.2 Who should obtain evidence of results and when should evidence be obtained?

The beneficiary organisation should obtain evidence of results.

When should evidence be obtained?

Results evidence should be gathered in a timely way. To be counted as a result (for headline MI reporting purposes to the European Commission) the result should have been achieved (manifested itself) within 4 weeks of the date when the participant left the operation.

Again, the beneficiary organisation / opt-in organisation decides the best approach for their projects – whether delivered by themselves or by delivery partners and they need to consider the associated risks when making their decision. Procedures and controls must be put in place to prevent eligible results payments being declared to the ESF Managing Authority / IB until suitable evidence is provided. Suitable evidence must be provided for results payments. No exceptions can be made for results evidence

3.3 How must results assessments be carried out?

This guidance aims to help beneficiary organisations comply with the England ESF Managing Authority's eligibility rules

The England ESF Managing Authority/Intermediate Body and auditors will check **whether** the beneficiary / delivery partner has followed the methodology correctly.

Beneficiary organisations should always request 'preferred evidence'. If the preferred evidence is not available they should consult with the Managing Authority so that alternative evidence can be considered.

Auditors may review the methods used by beneficiary organisations to highlight misuse of the rules and/or unusual trends against comparable projects.

3.4 Methodology for obtaining evidence of ESF results

The methodology for obtaining evidence of ESF results is potentially a three-step process (compared to a potential five-step process for eligibility checks).

- Step 1: The beneficiary organisation / delivery partner should obtain documentary evidence of the result (in line with the preferred list of evidence – see table 4 below).
- Step 2: If the preferred evidence is not available, the beneficiary organisation should consult with the Managing Authority to agree alternative evidence that may be acceptable.
- Step 3: If no alternative, suitable evidence can be found, no payment should be made or counted.

Table 4: Preferred evidence for assessing evidence of results achieved in ESF

Result type	Indicative list of supportive documentation (only one item from the list required)
Into employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Confirmation of employment from employer (this could be a letter, email or a template) - Wage slip (this could also be linked to other conditions where appropriate – e.g. wage slips covering a specific time period) - Contract of employment
Into self-employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Confirmation of self- employment – e.g. HMRC letter evidencing registration - Bank statement for business account - Registration with Companies House
Into job-search	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Award letter / notification detailing Jobseeker’s Allowance - Copy of individual’s bank statement showing benefit payments - Signed referral from DWP - ES40 (Jobseekers card) or My Work Plan demonstrating current status - Signed referral / template from recognised agency / service who can reasonably be considered to have an accurate knowledge of the participants circumstances (e.g. local authority, public body, or organisation receiving public funding)
Into education / training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evidence of enrolment / registration at school, college, university or learning provider (documentation) - Letter / template from educational / training institution

Result type	Indicative list of supportive documentation (only one item from the list required)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Signed referral / template from recognised agency / service who can reasonably be considered to have an accurate knowledge of the participants circumstances (e.g. local authority)
Gaining a qualification or part of a qualification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Qualification certificate issued to individual. (Project should keep a copy of the certificate in the participant's record and certify it as a true copy of the original). - Letter / template / award letter / confirmation from awarding body - Project or the participant to request conformation of the qualifications in writing from the academic institution / qualification body.
YEI - offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship, traineeship on leaving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Letter of offer of employment / apprenticeship / traineeship from employer (the offer must comply with MI definition of `offer`); - Letter or template from educational institution / evidence of enrolment in formal education or training programmes leading to a recognised qualification
YEI – completion of YEI supported intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participant attendance record demonstrating that the participant attended the intervention according to schedule until the last day / last session of its scheduled end. - Action plan signed off as completed by provider and participant - In-house attendance certificate confirming attendance and completion of YEI provision.